

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (Currently Amended) A method for forming a stepped profile from a layer sequence {2} in which,
  - a) in a first patterning step, a first layer partial sequence {21} is removed apart from a first residual layer partial sequence {211},
  - b) in a second patterning step, a second layer partial sequence {22} located below the first layer partial sequence {21} is partially removed by means of etching with a second etchant,
  - c) in a third patterning step, a third layer partial sequence {22} located below the second layer partial sequence {22} is partially removed by means of etching with a third etchant  
~~characterized in that~~ wherein
  - d) in the second patterning step, a region of the second layer partial sequence {22} that is located below the first residual layer partial sequence {211} is removed, a first projection {A} of the residual layer partial sequence {211} being formed,
  - e) in the third patterning step, the first projection {A} of the first residual layer partial sequence {211} is removed.

2. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the second and third patterning steps are effected in aqueous solution.

3. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the first patterning step is carried out by means of etching with a first etchant.

4. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 3, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein a substantially identical chemical composition is chosen for the first etchant and for the third etchant.

5. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein, in the first patterning step, the first layer partial sequence (21) is removed to an extent such that a second projection (B) of the protective layer (3) arises, which second projection has a length  $t_1$  greater than a thickness  $d_1$  of the first layer partial sequence (21).

6. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the first layer partial sequence (21) substantially comprises Ag, the second layer partial sequence (22) substantially comprises Ni, and the third layer partial sequence (23) substantially comprises Ti.

7. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein an aqueous solution of nitric acid,

preferably in a dilution ratio of 1:z where  $2.0 < z < 8.0$ , is used as the second etchant.

8. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding~~ claims claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein a mixture of hydrogen peroxide, ammonium hydroxide and water, preferably in a volume ratio of approximately 1:x:y, is used as the first and third etchants, where  $0.5 < x < 2.0$  and  $4.0 < y < 10.0$ .

9. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding~~ claims claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein, prior to the first patterning step, a protective layer (3) is provided on the first layer partial sequence (21).